

Message Text

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ORIGIN EB-08

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O 242201Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 215973

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, IT

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: GOI THREAT TO PAN AM FLIGHTS BEYOND ROME

REF: (A) ROME 15380, (B) ROME 15465, (C) STATE
201639, (D) STATE 191605, (E) STATE 196449

1. DEPARTMENT AGREES IT IS NECESSARY TO PRESENT
STRONG PROTEST TO GOI OVER ITS ESCALATION OF THE PAN AM
CAPACITY ISSUE. MFA AIDE MEMOIRE REPORTED REF A
ESCALATES ISSUE IN TWO WAYS:

A. ITALIANS HAD EARLIER GRANTED PAN AM A REPRIEVE
THROUGH AUGUST 31 (ROME 14812), NOW SHORTENED TO AUGUST
25.

B. ITALIANS HAVE CLEARLY CHANGED THEIR OWN INTERPRETA-
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TIONS OF CAPACITY FREEZE IN ORDER TO APPLY MORE PRESSURE
ON USG AND PAN AM.

2. WE ALSO NOTE THAT THE GOI HAS NOT REPLIED TO EARLIER
EMBASSY NOTES BASED ON REFS D AND E NOR TO AIDE MEMOIRE
(REF C) DELIVERED IN WASHINGTON.

3. PER EMBASSY SUGGESTION, NOTE BASED ON FOLLOWING TEXT SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO HIGH LEVEL MFA:

BEGIN TEXT...REFERS TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AIDE MEMOIRE DATED AUGUST 22, 1978 CONTAINING THE GOVERNMENT OF ITALY'S POSITION ON THE PERMISSIBLE LEVEL OF PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS' SCHEDULED OPERATIONS EAST OF ROME THIS SUMMER UNDER THE CAPACITY FREEZE.

THE MINISTRY'S NOTE UNILATERALLY ASSERTS THAT PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS IS LIMITED TO OFFERING ONLY 77,040 TOTAL SEATS EAST OF ROME DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 1 TO OCTOBER 31, 1978. THIS POSITION IS NOT ONLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE 1970 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BUT IS ALSO AT VARIANCE WITH THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES IN PREVIOUS NOTES, PARTICULARLY THE MINISTRY'S NOTE OF AUGUST 3 WHERE IT WAS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE LIMITATION WAS INTENDED TO APPLY TO THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS CARRIED, RATHER THAN TO THE NUMBER OF SEATS OPERATED. THE UNITED STATES DID NOT, AND STILL DOES NOT, ACCEPT THE VALIDITY OF THE PREVIOUS ITALIAN POSITION THAT THE PASSENGER LIMITATION SHOULD APPLY TO ALL TRAFFIC ON BOARD PAN AMERICAN EAST OF ROME AND ON A FLIGHT-BY-FLIGHT BASIS. IT MUST, HOWEVER, CATEGORICALLY REJECT THE ATTEMPT OF THE ITALIAN AUTHOR-
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ITIES TO ASSERT, AT THIS LATE DATE, A MORE RESTRICTIVE POSITION THAN THEY PREVIOUSLY ASSERTED.

MOREOVER, THIS MORE RESTRICTIVE POSITION, IF PURSUED, WOULD FORCE PAN AMERICAN TO SUSPEND ALL SERVICES EAST OF ROME IMMEDIATELY. SUCH A FORCED SUSPENSION WOULD NOT ONLY BE A SERIOUS VIOLATION OF A BILATERAL AGREEMENT, BUT WOULD CAUSE MASSIVE DISRUPTION OF TRAVELERS WHO HAVE BOOKED PASSAGE ON THE US AIRLINE DURING THE PEAK OF THE TRAVEL SEASON. THE US ASSUMES THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT UNMINDFUL OF THE PERSONAL HARDSHIPS WHICH THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT TRAVELERS, MANY OF THEM VISITORS TO ITALY, WOULD SUFFER IF THE THREATENED ACTION IS CARRIED OUT.

THE UNITED STATES VIEWS WITH SOME CONCERN THE FACT THAT THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT YET RESPONDED TO ANY OF THE SUBSTANTIVE POINTS MADE IN THE EMBASSY'S NOTES OF AUGUST 3 AND 5 AND IN THE AIDE MEMOIRE DELIVERED TO THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON ON AUGUST 9. THE ITALIAN AIDE MEMOIRE OF AUGUST 22 CANNOT BE VIEWED AS A SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS US

REPRESENTATIONS.

THE UNITED STATES URGES THAT THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES

NOT TAKE PRECIPITOUS ACTION WHICH WOULD DO POSSIBLY
IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO THE FUTURE OF USITALY AIR
TRANSPORT RELATIONS AND WHICH COULD ONLY FORCE THE US
TO TAKE COMPENSATING ACTION. SUCH A DETERIORATION OF
AVIATION RELATIONS WILL NOT SERVE THE INTERESTS OF
EITHER COUNTRY MUCH LESS THE TRAVELING PUBLIC WHICH
WOULD BE THE INNOCENT VICTIM.

THE US BELIEVES THAT BOTH COUNTRIES STAND TO GAIN IF
CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES CAN TAKE
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PLACE DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS SCHEDULED FOR
OCTOBER, AND IT IS EAGER TO PROCEED ALONG SUCH CON-
STRUCTIVE LINES. THE US, THEREFORE, AGAIN URGES THAT
THE INSTANT ISSUES BE ADDRESSED AND RESOLVED DURING
THESE NEGOTIATIONS. END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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